

Using songs in the classroom

1: The Cloze or gap fill.

- Have a point, be it vocabulary or prepositions or whatever.
- Don't cloze 3 or more in a row.
- For lower levels: give the first letter, miss out word endings, give dashes for letters, or give a glossary.
- Give vocabulary clues or synonyms for the missing words.
- Get students to work in pairs to predict words before you play the tape.
- Insert extra words which students then cross out as they listen.
- Change the words, as in "Careful Shouts" or "Countless Whiskies."
- Cloze unstressed, then stressed words in the same song, and have students discuss why one is easier than the other.
- Cloze several words in a row and Ss have to guess not only form (adj. adv, n, vb, prep.) but words, rhythm and rhyme.

2: A-B activities.

Students match beginnings and ends of lines, such as "Another Day in Paradise" (simple) or "Private Investigations" & "If Only..." (more complicated).

3: Mixed-up activities.

Generally, have the lines of the song on separate strips of paper

- Students put down strips as they hear them.
- Mixed-up lines/verses.
- Students try to organize in advance (use prompts).

4: Dictation

- Wall dictation
- Self-dictation (whole song blanked)
- Part Dictation

5: Translation.

- Class chooses a song from their own language.
- Groups translate.
- Check with other groups.
- Combine the best. Then work on rhyme and rhythm.

6: Jigsaw-listening.

Groups listen to different songs with the same (Luka/Behind the Wall) or different themes (Easy Street/Money for Nothing) and peer teach vocabulary, compare.

7: Composing.

Listen to the song

- Students add verses of their own. Good songs for this are, "Imagine" & "Man Gave Names To All The Animals" by Bob Dylan.
- Students finish the line in each verse, then listen to check.
- In groups, students then write their own verse.

8: Writing.

Put random words from the song on the board. Students try and write the "tale of the song."

- Students paraphrase the song
- Cut the song in half. Students predict the other half.

9: Pronunciation.

- He's got the whole world... /h/ sound
- Do I speak double Dutch to a real double duchess... /d/ sound

10: Vocabulary

- Miming verbs
- Dictionary work
- Matching

11: Listening.

- Give Ss word list. Ss number as they hear them.
- Sound discrimination, e.g. tempted/tended

12: Song Posters.

Arrange lyrics and pictures, or just lyrics, or translate

Source: <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/activities/using-songs-classroom>

(More) Ideas for using songs in the class

- ★ **Reading or listening comprehension:** Use the song text as a normal reading or listening text with the bonus of hearing it sung afterwards
- ★ **Listen and discuss:** Get Ss to listen to the whole song once or twice, or to a shorter section. Discuss what happened, reactions, interpretations, predictions, etc. Printed lyrics could be given if you wish.
- ★ **Gapped text:** Give Ss the lyrics with certain words blanked out. They have to listen carefully and fill in the missing words (the 'classic' gap fill....) Vary this task by, for example, using the gaps as a pre-listening exercise, with Ss predicting what the missing words are.
- ★ **Song jumble:** Cut the lyrics into separate lines. In small groups, Ss try to work out the original order. When ready, they listen and compare their guess with the actual song.
- ★ **Sing along:** The aim is to learn the tune and to get the rhythm well enough to sing along with the original recording. This can be quite challenging and requires some careful preparation work on practicing stress and rhythm (probably with spoken rather than sung sentences, perhaps using individual, mouthed and choral practice).
- ★ **Compose:** 'Here's the tune – now you write the lyrics.' (Again, an activity that is quite challenging on stress and rhythm.)
- ★ **Matching pictures:** 'Here are twenty pictures connected with the song. Listen and put them in order in which you hear them in the song.'
- ★ **Action movements:** Listen to one line at the time. For each line, the Ss invent a mimed action, which they teach each other and then all perform. Regularly replay the song from the beginning for them to recall and do the relevant actions. After they have done one or two verses, hand out the complete lyrics; in small groups, the Ss find movements for the rest of the song. At the end, all come together to watch a performance of the different versions.
- ★ **Dictation:** Dictate the chorus or the whole song. Compare with the recording.
- ★ **Picture dictation:** Decide on a representative picture of something that happens in a song. Dictate the information about this picture, a line at a time to the Ss who draw (not write) their interpretation. For example, 'The sun is shining in the sky, there are a lot of people in the street, there is a dark cloud overhead, it's just starting to rain', etc. By the time you have finished, a lot of essential lexis and phrases from the song will have been circulating and the song should be not too difficult to follow.

and one last thing....Music on its own, especially classical, can also be useful in the classroom:

- ★ to set the mood at the start of the lesson;
- ★ to give you something to talk about with your Ss at the start of the lessons (especially useful with a class you don't know);
- ★ as background music while Ss work on 'dull' exercises;
- ★ as background music to set the scene while Ss do a particular task (e.g. 'space' music during a discussion on life on other planets; fast, exciting music during a competition);
- ★ simply for pleasure or as a break between activities;
- ★ to help Ss relax;
- ★ for 'imagining': Ss close their eyes and visualize images from their own imagination or from words or someone else's (this is a good way to personalise topics – 'Think back to a time when you...');
- ★ to close down, conclude, round off the lesson – to say goodbye with.
- ★ sharing music can be fun: encourage Ss to bring their favourite recordings, tell you why they like them, share the lyrics, etc. It's a great starting point for discussion and study.